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SENATE JUDICIARY  
Exhibit No. 2  
Date 2-8-07  
Bill No. SB 300

February 7, 2007

The Honorable Jesse Laslovich  
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Montana Senate  
PO Box 200500  
Helena, MT 59620-0500

RE: SB 300 – Primary Seatbelts

Dear Chairman Laslovich and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the Yellowstone City-County Board of Health, I urge your passage of SB 300, which provides for a primary seatbelt law, sponsored by Senator Mike Cooney. SB 300 is an important measure in ensuring that all Montanans and those traveling on our highways and city streets make it safely to their destinations.

The statistics are compelling. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Montana vehicle fatality rate in 2005 was 26.8 deaths per 100,000 compared to the national average of 14.7 deaths. Additionally, the Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) project within the NHTSA tallied the average hospital charge for a motor vehicle crash victim in Yellowstone County in 2003 at \$48,692 if that person was not wearing a seatbelt.

Data from the Montana State Trauma Bank paints a similar picture. In 2005, 251 Montanans lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes; 73% of them were not wearing a seatbelt. In the same year, 23 motor vehicle crash victims were hospitalized with spinal cord injuries; 61% of them were not wearing a seatbelt. Furthermore, information from the Spinal Cord Information Network estimates the lifetime cost of medical care for people with spinal cord injuries to be nearly \$3 million if a person is rendered a quadriplegic.

Montana deserves to join the ranks of the 25 other states and the District of Columbia in having a life-saving primary seatbelt law. By passing SB 300, you will be preventing unnecessary injuries and deaths on our roadways.

Thank you again for your favorable consideration of SB 300. I look forward to working with you on this and other important public health measures. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [barbaras@ycchd.org](mailto:barbaras@ycchd.org) or 651-6420.

Sincerely,

Barbara Schneeman, Manager  
Communications and Advocacy

CC: Senators Mike Cooney, Dan McGee, Lynda Moss, Gerald Pease